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# CHAPTER 7

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## EMPLOYEE TRAINING

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### Introduction

A well-trained work force developed to its full potential is generally recognized and accepted as an essential objective of personnel management. A planned program designed to increase the knowledge, proficiency, ability and skills of district personnel is vital to the overall administration of district programs.

Effective training and development programs should meet the immediate and long-range goals of the district as well as the personal goals of employees. The concept of providing the opportunity, budgeting the necessary funds, and arranging for the training of employees may be new to many districts but should be seen as an investment in the future of the district.

The inevitable process of change brings about new concepts and demands in district programs, to which both the employees and district officials must adapt. The way a district accommodates these changes will depend largely on how well district employees have been prepared for growth.

Too often, however, employees are expected to learn their jobs by trial and error, by osmosis, or by picking up a few hints here and there. However, these methods of training are not adequate anymore because:

1. **Of the legal consequences of staff actions.**
2. **The quantity of work has increased.** There is more to know and less time to devote to all the work items at hand. Efficiency through training will enable your employees to accomplish much more than if they have to "stumble" their way through things.
3. **More important decisions are being made.** The decisions you make regarding erosion complaints, farmland protection, water quality, priorities of work, etc., impact many people.
4. **The public expects your employees to be knowledgeable.** Granted, a person cannot know everything there is to know, but the public expects your employees to be well informed. The credibility of your employee and your district is on the line as your employee interacts with the people in your district. Everyone knows it is harder to build credibility than to destroy it. Why jeopardize your district's credibility? You have worked too hard to build it up over the years.
5. **Training leads to job satisfaction.** A trained employee will be happier with their job; and you, as a district supervisor, will be more satisfied with the results of your employee's work.

## Training Approach

The training of district employees should be approached systematically to avoid duplication of effort and to get the most out of district training dollars. The following approach is recommended.

1. Determine training needs
2. Set training objectives
3. Decide how training will be accomplished

### 4. Evaluate training

**Determining training needs.** Both supervisors and employees are responsible for seeing that training needs are identified, discussed and acted upon. Some ways in which training needs can be determined are:

1. Daily observations
2. Performance reviews
3. Progress reports
4. Job application form
5. Discussions with employees

When training needs have been determined, they should be recorded as precisely as possible, including method, objectives and formal course names where appropriate. The Training Plan Form (Exhibit 7.3) is a convenient way of recording training needs. The determination and recording of district training needs should be coordinated with NRCS and the SCC where appropriate.

**Setting training objectives.** Training for training's sake has little value. Before any training is scheduled, a definitive objective should be set that will let the employee know exactly why the training is being provided. Employees should have an observable change in ability, skill or knowledge after receiving the training. For example, a district secretary may be scheduled for training in accounting in order to maintain district records in accordance with accepted accounting principles.

**Deciding how training will be accomplished.** Training should be accomplished whenever possible through self-development or on-the-job training. This provides the most cost-effective method. Self-development includes home study courses, planned experience, conferences, course work at local schools and participation in professional societies. On-the-job training requires supervisor input or input from specialists. This training should be well thought out, scheduled and carried through to completion just as if formal classroom training were provided.

If training needs cannot be satisfied by either of the two methods mentioned above, identified needs can be met by formal training courses at the NRCS training centers, at state sponsored and organized training courses, at local vocational schools and at colleges and universities.

**Evaluating training.** Training should be evaluated on the objectives set prior to providing the training. The results of training should be reflected in improved performance, utilization of new skills and acceptance of increased responsibility and new duties. Position descriptions and performance standards should be reviewed often to determine if training has necessitated a revision of either of these documents. See Exhibit 7.7 in this chapter for a training evaluation form.

## Whose Responsibility is the District's Training Program

It is unrealistic to believe all district board members will become involved in their district's employee training program. However, it would be good to appoint one board member or associate to oversee the district's training program. The board or its member appointed as the employee's immediate supervisor, are those ultimately responsible for all their employees' training.

## Coordination with NRCS and SCC

Training that will require input from NRCS or use of NRCS organized courses should be fully coordinated with NRCS district conservationist.

For conservation district-related training, contact the State Conservation Commission to schedule training assistance.

A checklist for employee training is included in this chapter as Exhibit 7.1.

## Individual Training Plans

As with position descriptions and performance standards, training plans should be tailored to the individual. The employee and the employee's supervisor should jointly prepare any training needs, objectives, and plans for satisfying the needs. Exhibits 7.4 to 7.6 of this chapter suggest some items to cover in individual training plans.

Normally, a new employee is operating at full capacity within one year of appointment. During the first six months a general orientation should be provided along with assignments that will show where the job fits into the organization and what is expected from the individual. Because basic orientation to the job is very important, it should be provided as soon as possible after appointment. The second six months gives the individual the opportunity to gain confidence and to concentrate on developing proficiency in the position.

## Orientation Sessions

An appropriate introduction to the new position and to the district will improve the performance of an employee and expedite productivity. Proper orientation in the beginning can prevent misunderstandings, confusion and dissatisfaction later.

The orientation can be formal and extensive or informal and fairly short, depending on the needs of the particular district. Completeness and clarity are more important than audiovisual aids or color brochures.

The first orientation session should be on the first day of employment if possible. Additional sessions throughout any probationary period should be held as needed.

Some things that should be covered or done at the first orientation session are:

1. Explain the district mission and relationship of the district to county, State Conservation Commission, Kansas Association of Conservation Districts,

Natural Resources Conservation Service and other state and federal agencies.

2. Introduce the employee's immediate supervisor and jointly review terms of employment.
3. Discuss work hours, breaks and lunch breaks.
4. Explain the details of pay: how much, when, and where.
5. Explain probationary period, performance appraisal, and salary increases.
6. Explain all applicable benefits and provide the employee with a written copy signed by the employer.
7. Discuss safety procedures and where to report accidents.
8. Complete all necessary forms (W-4, emergency information, insurance sign-up, etc.).
9. Provide the employee with a copy of the position description.
10. Provide the employee with a copy of the district personnel policy.
11. Sign for receipt of copies of personnel policy and keys, etc., on a check sheet.
12. Provide the employee with a copy of the district annual work plan, annual report and long-range plan.
13. Provide time for the employee to ask questions.
14. Send information in advance if possible.

See Exhibit 7.2 for a sample "Orientation Checklist."

## EXHIBIT 7.1 CHECKLIST FOR EMPLOYEE TRAINING

ITEM	COMPLETED
1. Meet with employee soon after entrance on duty date to discuss training needs.	_____
2. Contact NRCS, State Conservation Commission, Cooperative Extension representatives or others who will provide training to ensure their input.	_____
3. Develop a written training plan that covers the following: a. Training item to be provided b. When training will take place c. Who will provide training	_____
4. Ensure training funds are in district budget.	_____
5. Ensure employee understands they have a major responsibility to ensure the training plan is followed.	_____
6. Ensure all parties involved understand their responsibilities.	_____
7. Each February, review any formal training NRCS has to offer and request district employee participation in specific courses.	_____
8. At performance appraisal time and at other times as necessary, review training plan with employee.	_____
9. Update training plan, at least annually.	_____

## EXHIBIT 7.2 SAMPLE ORIENTATION CHECKLIST

The following checklist is to be used by the new employee as a general guide to become more familiar with various job aspects. Instructions and guidance will be provided by district and NRCS staff. The district Policies and Procedures Handbook will also provide helpful information.

### OFFICE EQUIPMENT

Typewriter: manual, ribbons, correction tapes, where and when to have cleaned or repaired. \_\_\_\_\_

Photocopier: may be shared with other offices or district owned. If district or NRCS owned, know where supplies are located and where to call for machine service. \_\_\_\_\_

Calculator \_\_\_\_\_

Camera: manual, file supplies, and where to have film developed. \_\_\_\_\_

Computer: NRCS or district owned. Do tutorials. Know where to find diskettes. Know who to call when trouble arises. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### OFFICE SERVICES

Know what services the conservation district and NRCS have available. Know what your responsibilities are concerning these services.

Grass Seed Sales \_\_\_\_\_

Drill Rental \_\_\_\_\_

Flag Sales \_\_\_\_\_

Drip Irrigation Supplies \_\_\_\_\_

No-Till Planter Rental \_\_\_\_\_

Root Plow Rental \_\_\_\_\_

Conservation Practice & Staking Check-out \_\_\_\_\_

Educational Programs \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### FIELD EQUIPMENT/SUPPLIES

Know where all equipment and supplies are stored and policies for use. Know information concerning servicing and maintenance.

Pickup(s) \_\_\_\_\_

ATV(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Tree Planter(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Grass Drill(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Tree Cultivation Equipment \_\_\_\_\_

No-Till Planter \_\_\_\_\_

Root Plow \_\_\_\_\_

Drip Torch \_\_\_\_\_

Level(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Soil Probe \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**COMPLETED**

## EXHIBIT 7.2 SAMPLE ORIENTATION CHECKLIST (continued)

### COMPLETED

#### OFFICE SUPPLIES

Know how to keep a supply of:

Stamps for district and NRCS mailing.

Computer Paper.

Stationery and envelopes for district and NRCS.

District financial supplies: checks, vouchers, bills, ledgers, etc.

Miscellaneous supplies: paper clips, rubber bands, scissors, pencils, pens, rulers, file folders, file labels, staples, 3-ring binders, note pads, etc.

#### FILING SYSTEMS

District files: see "Conservation District Filing Guide" located in the *Kansas Conservation District Handbook*. Take the time to go through all of your district files. This will give you a good indication of the kinds of activities within your district.

NRCS files: know files location and established filing system. NRCS personnel will assist.

Manuals & Handbooks: NRCS is responsible for providing training on filing amendments and notices.

NRCS and SCC forms: know where these files are located.

Soil maps, soil interpretations, survey books, aerial photos, etc.: know where located and request NRCS training on locating specific sections, townships and ranges.

#### GENERAL OFFICE PROCEDURES

Mail: procedure for handling incoming and outgoing.

Phone: answering, taking messages, placing caller on hold, interrupting co-workers, etc.

Appointments: know time frame per appointment, avoid time conflicts, know co-worker's schedules.

Messages: record pertinent information clearly. Know where to leave messages for co-workers.

Finances: become familiar with past bookkeeping procedures. Know where your district may charge supplies, gas, repairs, etc.

## EXHIBIT 7.2 SAMPLE ORIENTATION CHECKLIST (continued)

### AVAILABLE HELP RESOURCES

### COMPLETED

State Conservation Commission Directory: lists conservation districts, district staff, district supervisors with telephone numbers and addresses.

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Kansas Association of Conservation Districts Directory: lists KACD Board of Directors, State Conservation Commission staff, KACD Auxiliary, KACD Committees, KACD-EO Executive Board and KACD constitution and by-laws.

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NRCS Directory: lists all NRCS personnel with office telephone numbers and addresses.

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*Kansas Conservation District Handbook*: assists employees with various conservation district procedures and operations.

*State Conservation Commission Program Manual*: contains information and forms on Commission programs.

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*NPS Pollution Program Manual*: contains information on the NPS pollution control program and forms.

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Field Office Guide (FOG): assists employees in various NRCS related procedures and programs.

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SCC conservation district program coordinator.

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NRCS Area Administrative Assistant: (see NRCS directory for your area.)

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Other district employees: all district employees are willing to help one another.

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*Kansas Conservation District Supervisors Handbook*: contains information on supervisors roles and responsibilities.

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## EXHIBIT 7.7 TRAINING EVALUATION FORM

### GENERAL INFORMATION

NAME - LAST, FIRST, MI  _____	
COURSE TITLE  _____	DATE(S) HELD  _____

### OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE(S) FOR ATTENDING:	WERE OBJECTIVES ATTAINED?
_____	___ YES ___ NO
_____	_____
_____	_____

### COURSE CONTENT

___ MANAGEMENT ___ TECHNICAL ___ SUPERVISORY ___ ADMINISTRATIVE ___ WORK METHODS ___ OTHER _____		
INFORMATION WAS: ___ DIRECTLY APPLICABLE AND OF IMMEDIATE USE ___ PROBABLY USEFUL, EVENTUALLY MIGHT BE USED ___ TOO THEORETICAL ___ OTHER _____		
OVERALL COURSE WAS: ___ EXCELLENT ___ GOOD ___ AVERAGE ___ FAIR ___ OF NO VALUE		
LIST THE MOST VALUABLE ITEMS INTRODUCED IN THIS COURSE:		
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
OTHER COMMENTS:		
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

### INSTRUCTION

INSTRUCTOR'S NAME AND TITLE _____	
INSTRUCTOR'S KNOWLEDGE WAS: ___ EXCELLENT ___ GOOD ___ AVERAGE ___ FAIR ___ POOR	
INSTRUCTOR'S ABILITY WAS: ___ EXCELLENT ___ GOOD ___ AVERAGE ___ FAIR ___ POOR	

### RECOMMENDATION FOR OTHERS

___ AVOID THIS COURSE ___ SEND OTHERS AS NEEDED ___ OTHER _____
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